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Division of Food and Drugs
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Food Protection Program Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

Issue: Revised Testing Requirements for Private Water Supplies Utilized by
Massachusetts Food Manufacturers and Processors **No:** FP-05

The intent of this revision is to maintain and promote public health safeguards where food manufacturers and processors utilize water from a private water supply, while protecting and encouraging the growth, stability and equal access of Massachusetts' small business enterprises.

The use of untreated and unmonitored private water supplies can present a major public health threat. This potential threat is recognized by both state and federal regulations, which explicitly require the use of water in manufacturing and processing that is both safe and from an adequate source. Safe and adequate is synonymous with potable and approved. In order to safeguard the public health while simultaneously supporting the existence of Massachusetts' small business, the following requirements for the use of private water supplies have been adopted.

1. Where water from a private water supply is not an ingredient of a manufactured or processed food (less than 1 percent), but is used for the cleaning and/or washing of food and/or equipment, the manufacturer or processor shall test for total coliform, nitrates and nitrites annually. Additional testing may be required where test results indicate a real or potential problem or where an event has occurred within the buffer area that could affect the quality of the water.
2. Water from a private water supply used as an ingredient in a manufactured or processed food product shall be tested by a DEP certified laboratory. The water must meet DEP's drinking water standard for all analytes. A firm may choose to test for all of the analytes at one time or phase-in the tests over a 4-year period. Testing over the four years shall be performed in the following sequence:
 - 1st year of testing – inorganic compounds and physical properties
 - 2nd year of testing – pesticides (synthetic organic compounds)
 - 3rd year of testing – volatile organic compounds (VOCs)
 - 4th year of testing – radionuclides

Most analytes need only be tested for once. Tests for Total Coliform, Nitrites and Nitrates shall be conducted annually. The need for any additional testing for specific analytes, thereafter, will be determined on a case-by-case basis where test results indicate there may be a potential problem. An example might be in those circumstances where a particular analytes' analytical results approach or exceed the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL).

3. In lieu of water from a private water supply, a manufacturer or processor may elect to utilize public water or bottled water as an ingredient or for cleaning/washing. If a firm elects to use bottled water, the following is required:
 - The bottled water is bottled by a Massachusetts bottler that has a current, valid permit from the Local Board of Health of the city/town in which the plant is located, or
 - The bottled water is bottled by an out-of-state bottler that has a current, valid permit issued by the Division of Food and Drugs, and
 - The manufacturer/processor shall keep and maintain records of all purchases of bottled water for a minimum of 1 year.
4. There shall be no septic systems, waste disposal, vehicle and engine repair, vehicle parking, pesticide storage, mixing and loading, animal shelters or other potential sources of contamination within 100 feet of the private water supply. A firm may request a partial waiver of this requirement. All requests shall be in writing, and submitted to the Food Protection Program. If a waiver is requested, a site evaluation will be conducted to determine potential risks and the feasibility of reducing the perimeter of the buffer area. Depending upon the intended use of the well water and the activities occurring within the buffer area, the Department may, in its discretion, grant a partial waiver of this requirement. All waivers shall be in writing. The Department may, at any time, review the circumstances under which the waiver was granted to determine if it is still justified.
5. Analytical tests shall be conducted by laboratories certified by DEP for the analytes tested. Test results must be reported on laboratory letterhead. Analytical results must be submitted to the DFD by the establishment. The laboratories are familiar with the tests required for each category.
6. Valid analytical tests conducted within two years prior to the effective date of this policy may be submitted as evidence of full or partial compliance with this policy.